

#EVENT

Bringing Theater to the Masses

The 8th edition of the Rang Rajasthan theater festival kicked off in a truly unique way with a 'Walk Theater' event on 19 February. The theater enthusiasts showed their dedication and passion by braving an early Sunday morning to take part in the exhilarating 16 km walk, which started at the iconic Jawahar Kala Kendra and wound its way through several scenic spots in the city including Hawa Mahal and Albert Hall.



Tusharika Singh
Freelancer writer and city blogger

The Pink City was alive with theatrical energy on the morning of February 19, as theater enthusiasts from across Rajasthan gathered for the 8th edition of the Rang Rajasthan theater festival. But this year, the festival kicked off in a way that was truly one-of-a-kind, with a mesmerizing Walk Theater event 'Rang Karvaan' that left the Jaipurites with a feeling of awe and excitement. Early on a Sunday morning, participants gathered at the iconic Jawahar Kala Kendra to embark on a



thrilling 16 km walk through some of the city's most scenic spots, including the Hawa Mahal and Albert Hall. Along the way, they performed as many 18 spectacular theatrical acts, including physical performances, musical acts, poetry renditions, and monologues. These included rendition of Krishna Chetvani by Girish Kumar Yadav, Rang Rajasthan Ki Jeevan Yatra by Yuvraj, Geet Garibon Ka by Sudhanshu, Exam Fever and The Recipe of a Criminal by Fritam, Dot Stop by Shweta and Shikha, among others. The brainchild of Abhishek Mudgal, founder of the Rang Rajasthan festival and leader of the Rang



Durjoy Datta.



Shaillaza Singh
Published author, poet and a YouTuber

#THIS-ALSO-HAPPENED-AT-JLF

Judging by the crowds of youngsters following him at the recently concluded Jaipur Literature Festival, if Shah Rukh Khan is the king of romance in movies, Durjoy Datta can be called the king of romance in novels. Since 2008, with his first book 'Of course I Love You Till I Find Someone Better' he has been ruling the hearts of millions of teenage readers, especially girls.

This was the fourth such walk organized by the group in Jaipur, and it attracted participation from some of the most eminent figures in the world of theater, including the renowned mime artist Vichitra Bahadur, who presented a stunning mime performance, and Rajendra Singh Payal, who narrated the story of Jaipur.

Telling more about the event, Abhishek Mudgal shared: "The walk started at 6

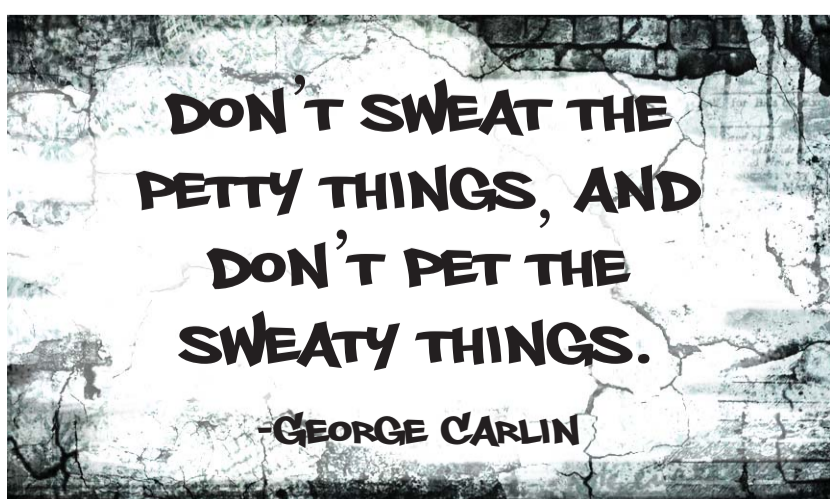
Q: From the time you published your first book in 2008 to today, how have you evolved as a writer?
A: I think at that time, I was a teenager and had a different perspective on romance. After my first book was declared a best seller, writing became a means to earn money. But over the years, I have started enjoying writing and the kind of freedom I get with it. Hence, I would like to safeguard my career as a writer.

Q: Why do you only like writing romance? Why don't you experi-

am and lasted for approximately six hours, with the performances taking place at various venues along the route, including Gandhi Circle, Birla Mandir, Albert Hall, Tadkeshwar Mandir, Hawa Mahal, and Ravindra Manch. There were around 60-70 participants in the walk and at each venue they were joined by spectators from all walks of life.

The Rang Rajasthan theater festival will be on till 28 February at Jawahar Kala Kendra and will witness 21 plays and several workshops and masterclasses, school outreach programmes, talk shows, street plays as well as musical performances.

THE WALL



Durjoy Datta has ruled the world of romantic novels since 2008. All his books have been bestsellers in the teen world. This engineer turned writer is now also writing for movies and serials.

The King of Romantic Writing

just 12 years old. At that age, I was really intimidated by women. In those days, even if you had a crush on someone, you couldn't talk to them or express your feelings. But today, the society has shifted. Earlier it was all cloaks and daggers but now we can have open conversations about most things. Now people can express themselves. I remember in those days, there were two different worlds of girls and guys where each had their own groups. They had clandestine messages which if discovered by the elders could wreak havoc. Now the barriers have broken down even in the interiors to a large extent.

Q: As a person who specializes in romance, you must have read a lot of romantic books in your young years?

A: Actually, not at all! In my childhood, most of my reading has been dictated by my parents. Book reading was compulsory at bed time and no romance was allowed. I used to read Enid Blyton, John Grisham, Stephen King. After a while, my parents tried to introduce me to Salman Rushdie's work. Initially I didn't understand what he was talking about but then after a while I could relate to the books. In fact, I did not even know romance as a genre. Most of my introduction to romance has been while writing for television where you can create two extremely likeable characters and then make them fall in love and continue for the next 1200 episodes.

Q: People say with the social media and Kindle, paper books are not going to be around for long. What are your thoughts?
A: I remember hearing about it in 2008. People used to say that with the introduction of tablets and



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smart phones, books won't last for long but now it is 2023 and books are still here!

Q: Are you on social media? Has social media taken over books?
A: Earlier I was on social media and when I used to get into my Instagram account, I used to spend hours swiping. I used to think that if I am doing this, my readers would also be doing this. But lately I have started noticing that many people have dumped Instagram and have started reading books. I really got hooked on to the social media when I became a parent. Parenthood is extremely boring, at least for the first few years. So, Instagram helps you to reconnect with your child in a different way. For example, when I see my daughter doing something cute, I record it and post it. When people find it cute and like it, I go back and look at that 15 second clip to see what is cute in it. This way I use my followers as a dopamine fix. But then this used to take over my life because I used to then think about what should be the next video to maintain the same likes. No, I pulled back. Now I am on social media just to sell my books.

Q: What is the difference between writing for television and writing novels?

A: The difference between writing for television and a novel is a lot. Writing a book is a solitary exercise. There isn't much money unless your book becomes a best seller. But in case of television, the money is huge and the feedback of the writing is almost instantaneous. For example, if I publish a book today, the feedback will come after six months but in case of an episode, the feedback comes the very next day through the TRPS. That allows



Durjoy Datta with his novel.

the writer to change his play if the TRPs aren't good or the audience isn't enjoying the story.

Q: So, how much does TRP impact writing for television?
A: Actually TRP ratings are the life blood of television. The fact is that on television, a show cannot survive if it does not have high drama. Trends also dictate the show. For example, five years ago, there was this huge trend of getting animals on the show, so everyone followed that. Every show that you see on television starts with a very noble thought. They have a social issue they want to tackle through a story. But eventually everyone has put in so much of money that they try to get as much traction as possible.

I remember Kuch Rang Pyar Ke Aise Bhi was perhaps one of the only shows in the history of television that went for so long because everyone involved in that show

believed in that show. The interesting thing is that though it did not have the usual saas bahu drama or those stories of reincarnation etc and it was a very progressive show, it still did not get good TRPs. Despite that the producers, the writers and the creators kept giving the show time so that people could see its value. And people saw its value. It is one of the highest watched shows on YouTube. A lot of people go back and watch the show. But it did not get the traditional TRPs.

Q: Do you think this kind of TRP governed shows are impacting our society?

A: Of course, there are conversations about this everywhere. For example, on social media a lot of people talk about toxic boyfriends but toxic husbands have been a theme on television for like years. Now it's like a self-fulfilling prophecy. You don't want to show such a thing but when you show it, your show works and attracts TRPs. That really impacts me since I am so emotionally invested as a writer. Here book writing is way better because by the time the book comes out and actually makes an impact in a year or two, you are a very different person. Also, once the book is read and the reaction comes, I cannot change the book as per the feedback by the readers.

Q: Do you doubt yourself at times?
A: There are times when I am afflicted with crippling self-doubt because I'm honestly not sure that my first book would be published and would become a best seller. You see the difference between the kind of books I read and write is huge. I got published at 21 when I was reading books that were leagues and leagues ahead of my book. Then when people say that they have read and liked my books, I start wondering if they have read the really 'good' books.

Q: Had you not tasted success in such a young age, would you have continued writing?

A: I have would have continued writing in some form or the other. Before I started writing books, I had a very successful blog. Lot of my blogger friends advised me to write. Had the book not worked, I would have continued writing and would have found another way of leveraging my writing.

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Durjoy Datta in conversation with Kiran Manral.

BABY BLUES



By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott



ZITS



#TRAVELOGUE

Quit Your Job & Move Abroad!

It's for anyone who is looking for a more affordable life or just a way to escape from it all

This is the year to pursue the dream: Quit your job and move to one of the cheapest (and best) places to live in the world, a country where it costs so little you might be able to stop working.

And here's the thing: This list isn't just for retirees. It's for anyone who is looking for a better life, a more affordable life or just a way to escape from it all—the frenetic pace of life, the violence, the politics, the divisiveness. "Consider your options overseas, and things start to look up," says International Living's executive editor Jennifer Stevens.

This list is also for people who are tired of the 9-to-5 grind and want to find the cheapest places to live in the world, countries where the cost of living is considerably cheaper than the U.S.—so cheap that you might not have to work.

Portugal

Why: This year, Portugal was named the top country to live. "It wins in part because of the strength of the U.S. dollar today. It's a timely pick because Europe is effectively on sale if you're shopping with greenbacks. It's a good time to go," says Stevens. "Beyond that, Portugal's visa



Panama

Why: Panama takes the third spot for 2023. "Panama—as always—just simply scores well across the board, and that means where the cost of living is considered cheaper than the U.S.—so cheap that you might not have to work."

Where to Move: A few communities to consider in Panama City (with a mix of skyscrapers and leafy neighbourhoods), Coronado (a vast residential complex that fulfills just about every expat need) and Boquete (a Panamanian highland town).

be just an hour from a real metropolis. The weather is warm year-round, Panama uses the U.S. dollar (though you won't feel the pinch of inflation there the way you may at home because even though prices may be up—they're still a fraction of what you pay at home).



Portugal.

options make staying there long-term relatively easy.

Where to Move: "Big cities like Lisbon and Porto are going to cost more, smaller towns less," says Stevens. "A few spots to consider in Portugal: Lagos, Vilamoura and Tavira. Lagos is a town with history on Portugal's sunny Algarve coast. Vilamoura is a landscaped resort community with gorgeous beaches. A former Roman seaport, Tavira is filled with buildings covered in blue and white tiles.

Mexico

Why: Mexico takes the second spot for 2023. "As in Europe, your dollars stretch incredibly far in Mexico today and for that reason, it, too, makes a timely pick," says Stevens. "And, of course, Mexico is so close. It's easy. And it's incredibly affordable."

Where to Move: "Mexico just offers so many options for people—stunning beaches on the Caribbean, dryer coast on the Pacific, Colonial cities rich with art and culture, lakeside living in a place like Chapala, where the weather is spring-like year-round," says Stevens. "A few spots in Mexico we recommend: Lake Chapala, Playa del Carmen, Queretaro." Lake Chapala is located in the cool highland region. Playa del

Carmen is a renowned beach city. Queretaro is a sophisticated highland city.

Ecuador

Why: "Ecuador is still a largely unexplored country not yet homogenized but still offering the conveniences of modern living, including high-speed fibre-optic internet, American dollar currency, temperate weather, good public transportation and affordable healthcare and housing," says International Living correspondent Donna Stiteler.

Where to Move: There are expat-friendly spots all over Ecuador. Larger expat communities are in Salinas, with its

beaches lined with modern condos; Cotacachi, a small, sleepy village where craftsmen make everything from leather goods to alpaca ponchos; Cuenca, the modern Andean resort town which is the cultural centre of Ecuador, where music, art and New Orleans-style architecture attracts visitors from around the world; and Vilcabamba, the home of the "Valley of Longevity" known for its Indigenous centenarians and laid-back expats who sit outside at cafes trading philosophies.

Costa Rica

Why: "With a lower cost of living, ease back and forth to North America and affordable medical care, it is not surprising that Costa Rica remains firmly near or at the top of international retirement lists," says International Living correspondent Kathleen Evans.

Where to Move: Costa Rica has something for everyone, with a dozen climate zones and hundreds of microclimates. "If you like hot weather, the dry tropical beaches of Guanacaste or the verdant jungles of the southern zone and Caribbean will not disappoint," says Evans. "Prefer something eternally temperate? The higher elevations of San José and the Central Valley would be the location of choice."



Costa Rica.

By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman